

# How the Paris Marriage Brokers Arrange Matters

GETTING married generally is supposed to be a romantic affair, serious, of course, but none the less a wholly sentimental adventure during its preliminaries and its honeymoon stages at least.

It appears, however, that in France it has come to be a well organized business, supervised by boards of directors and assistant managers, promoted by well financed corporations and the above mentioned preliminaries conducted according to rule and routine favorably looked upon by certain governmental bureaus.

It used to be a matter of the ring; now it's a matter of 1 per cent.

The situation attracts attention as the result of the brief, unromantic announcement of the Minister of Labor that during the fiscal year just closing there were many more than double the marriages in France that there were during the year preceding the war.

In view of the fact that France lost a million men killed outright in the war and 3,000,000 more who either died from wounds or were disabled permanently, the announcement by the Minister of Labor is interesting.

This increase of marriages is due to "marriage brokers." They have come into the limelight for public scrutiny as the result of the statistical announcement, and the revelation is amazing.

In America the marriage broker suffers the burden of suspicion and is looked upon with distrust. In France now the marriage brokers are the friends of "high and low," aristocrat and peasant, banker and tradesmen. They arrange, even, for money advances with which young couples who have neither dot nor savings may set up housekeeping; they have been known to pay the tuition for a course in a trade school for the subscribing would-be bridegroom, that he might fit himself better for marriage with a pretty client who likes him but who wants a husband who can earn a comfortable salary.

The charge is 1 per cent. of whatever money is involved in the marriage—and there always is money. The bride brings her dot and the bridegroom brings his business or his savings. If there is neither, and money has to be advanced to give the marriage a satisfactory start off, then promissory notes, based upon the earning capacity of the bridegroom and the prettiness and disposition of the bride, are accepted by the brokers—payable five, ten and fifteen years hence.

Perhaps the observer who declared that "the marriage brokers of France are 50 per cent. the hope of the nation" was not far wrong. The Government lends a hand to any project that will promote marriages—and the supply of future citizens. It is said never before have French girls done so much marrying as during the last two years.

Mme. Le Blanc is president and general manager of the Institute of Marriage, one of the foremost marriage corporations in France. She tells of an average Hector and Louise:

"Before the war it was that Louise should wait patiently until Hector, who lived in her village or in her neighborhood or perhaps had a business close by, discovered her and decided she should be his wife. Then Hector went to the parents of Louise and proposed himself, taking with him his bank books and a statement of his business affairs.

"Or perhaps it was that Hector never thought of Louise at all, never saw her and was caught by Cecille, who was equally attractive. So Louise became a little old and had to marry Henri, who was old too and who had no money whatever, and who considered that he offered a good bargain when he agreed to take Louise and her 50,000 francs at all.

"But now, after the war, France cannot wait until Hector picks out Louise or until she grows old and accepts Henri. France wants Hector and Louise to marry while the romance flowers around them, while they are young, and so—

"The Institute of Marriage! It is very simple and very businesslike. Hector knows very well he cannot see all the Louises in France and take his choice. Perhaps there is a prettier, a more gentle, a more attractive Louise in the next city, in the next district, than the one who lives near by. And Louise—her parents want the best Hector in France for her, of course. So—

They Provide Romance for Their Brides and Bridegrooms,  
and Even the Gentle Cures Assist in the Make-Believe—  
Needs of France Come First, Then Proper  
Mating, and Then the One Per Cent.  
the Young People Have to Pay



Mme. Le Blanc is president of the "Institute of Marriage" and "Hector comes to her and wants a good and a pretty girl; Mme. Le Blanc has many for him to choose from," and it is all for France, the charge being only 1 Per Cent.

back quickly and the institute waits impatiently for the letter from the city where lives Hector."

"Perhaps Hector has concealed something. Perhaps he has had one wife, who has died or one who has left him. The representative, in the former instance, seeks out the relatives of the former wife. From them he learns intimate things about Hector. If they are good things he then turns his attention to Hector's business and to his reputation for honest dealing and for industry. His parents or his relatives are inquired about; his banker is interviewed—if Hector is an important business man, why a more expert representative is sent to his neighborhood—one who can best determine whether or not he is a shrewd business man as well as an important one. For Louise must be protected—and her 50,000 francs as well. It would not do to have her dot invested in a business which would not be worthy of them.

"If all is well the representative of the institute writes his letter about Hector. But the matter is not closed abruptly. Louise is only 17 or so and must be romantic. Hector, too, must be sentimental—all Hectors are sentimental.

"The institute forgets for the moment its 1 per cent. It thinks very humanly of a young girl's right to be wooed and won, and of a young man's right to look back upon his marriage days with the reflection that he won his bride in a race with many other young men. A letter is sent to Hector advising him to go at once to the city wherein lives Louise and her adoring parents. Also there is sent him a letter of introduction to the Cure, who by now, has been admitted to the secret—

and where is there a Cure who will not help at love or conspire in the keeping of a secret?

"Hector visits the Cure. He realizes there is something mysterious afoot. He is not told by the institute or by the Cure that the parents of Louise, the young woman he is to meet, do not know he is a client of the institute, for we do not misrepresent. But he is not told, either, that they do know it. He is allowed to believe, from the mysterious way in which the Cure maneuvers, under the direction of the institute, that they do not.

"The Cure receives him gravely and reads his letter. Ah, indeed! Nearly all gentle old Cures are actors. The priest does not let on. He taps the letter. 'It is that a mutual friend of ours in Paris desires that you should have opportunity to meet Mme. and Monsieur Germonde. Tell me, Monsieur, is it by any chance that you have heard that Mme. and Monsieur Fermonde are parents of a very desirable young lady, Mlle. Louise, who is of the marriageable age and disposition and who will have a comfortable dot?' asks the Cure, gravely.

"I am seeking a wife, Father—I desire to make proposals for Mlle. Louise," says Hector, very matter of fact, most probably. It puzzles him a bit, this maneuvering. 'Is it possible, after all, this young lady, Mlle. Louise, and her parents do not know?' It seems so, truly.

"Then we shall arrange for you to meet Monsieur and Mme. Germonde," says the Cure. And he does. He goes himself, first, and most solemnly, to M. Germonde, declares that he is the bearer of important messages. That there has come to see him and to ask him to be intermediary a young man from Some-

where, who seems to be well commended, who desires to make proposals for the hand of the lovely and estimable Mlle. Louise. 'He comes bearing good letters from Paris,' adds the Cure. May I present him?

"So Hector is presented to Mme. and M. Germonde by the Cure, who, his duty thus performed, withdraws. Hector, convinced now by the manner of Madame and Monsieur that the institute has sent him a wooing upon his own account, knowing in some mysterious way that where he was sent he would find a maiden to his liking, who would not be averse to some sensible proposal, tells about himself and, bashfully perhaps, makes it known that he has heard of the charms of the Mademoiselle and has presumed to think that he might be acceptable to her.

"So Hector and Louise meet. Most often Louise does not know at all what her parents have been up to. But she does know, as does every other girl in France these days, that a proposal of marriage from a responsible, likable young man is not to be dismissed in scorn. They sit very stiffly in the parlor, Monsieur and Madame in the center of the room by the table, on which stands the lamp, and while Monsieur and Madame and Hector make conversation Mademoiselle listens meekly and looks at her hands, folded discreetly in her lap.

"Hector is delighted. Louise feels the urge of romance. In a little while they are duly engaged, the banns are published and the Cure goes about with a knowing little twinkle in his eye.

"So Hector and Louise are as if they had fallen in love with each other and had coquetted, and wooed, and pouted, and fussed a bit, and had given in to each other most sentimentally before agreeing to be married. Theirs has been a romance "just as Hector and Louise wanted it to be. And France is satisfied."

M. Chevrillon, who is managing director of the "School of Marriages," describes other incidents of the marriage brokers' experiences.

"We have many adventurers of both sexes who ask to be enrolled on our books," said M. Chevrillon. "From these we could collect large fees, much more than the little 1 per cent. we require. But we do not deal with them. The marriage bureaus that are properly conducted have established confidence and there is no limit to the capital we are to draw upon.

"See—I will tell of a case we are just concluding. It is that of a young Paul, who has studied to be an architect and who is just starting at the very bottom of his profession. Paul does not wish to be a clerk in another architect's office.

"Any kind of a wife? I asked him a little coldly. We do not like clients who speak right away of money like that. 'Oh, no, m'sieur,' said Paul, 'not any kind of a wife. She must be a very good girl and one who would be quite willing to let me use her money. And she must like me very much so she will not say afterward that she made a bad bargain.'

"We had on our lists a brunette of Grenoble, who had inherited a large substantial house and quite a little ground about it. She was young, just past 21—Paul was 23.

"I had only her photograph and some letters which had been written her by the friends of her family when her father died. I sent for Mlle. Helene to come to Paris.

"But how can I serve him, M'sieur; I have no money—just a house?"

"Soon I had persuaded Mlle. Helene that if she and Paul were agreeable to one another it would be well for her to sell her property—she could realize 100,000 francs on it easily. I would attend to that detail. Then she and Paul could start nicely in Paris.

"She clasped her hands and was all eager. She prepared for her first meeting with Paul with all the eagerness of the schoolgirl going to her first picnic. They met at the home of one of my assistants, where his wife received them. Paul was charmed. They were married almost at once. I managed to sell her property for more than I had expected. Paul now is just beginning to be successful; he has had several paying commissions. They will be very happy. My commission was only \$220, but I was well satisfied."